

Questions & Answers from Supervisor Anderson's "El Cajon Homelessness Forum"

On October 22, 2022, Supervisor Joel Anderson invited community members to participate in a forum at Grossmont College that focused on homelessness in El Cajon. The City of El Cajon thanks Supervisor Anderson for allowing participation in the forum.

Those that attended learned about the past programs and future plans that both the County of San Diego and the City of El Cajon have to address homelessness.

During the forum, participants were encouraged to submit questions in writing. Many of the questions were addressed during the event, but due to time, there were other questions that were not answered. Supervisor Anderson and City of El Cajon officials committed to provide all of the answers in writing and make them available to the public.

Some of the questions were directed specifically to the County, others specifically to the City, and others to both. The City provides its responses to the questions below and Supervisor Anderson's office has done the same. Click [HERE](#) for a link to the County's responses.

Robert Trumper	Is it possible to implement highway cleaners, graffiti removal, plant restoration into the lives of these homeless, unwilling/willing? Where they can work to restore the community, while receiving housing permanently for their contributions? In addition to mental health?
<p>Great idea. This is a model used around the world with success. For example, the Netherlands and Portugal have used this model to help reduce homelessness and open drug usage. Unfortunately, the "housing first" model (which is the model endorsed by the Federal and State government) does not allow cities to require effort or work in exchange for housing.</p> <p>However, programs such as those offered by ECTLC do use the strategy suggested. In fact, El Cajon's downtown businesses rely on homeless participants in ECTLC's program to provide clean-up services in El Cajon's downtown and help during special events.</p> <p>Also, other cities use similar programs. For example, the City of San Diego has a similar program with funding from the Lucky Duck Foundation. McAlister Institute's has a "Work for Hope" program with agreements with the cities of National City and Chula Vista.</p>	

Michael Silverman	A short time ago, I was interviewed by KUSI news about the 22 a day suicide rate, my answer was no one talks to veterans. What about people concerned with homelessness talking to the people on the street.
<p>Regionally, there are many programs that assist veterans experiencing homelessness. Calling 211 is an effective way to learn about the programs offered to veterans. Also, the organization Lived Experience Advisers https://www.livedadvisers.org, provides real life stories on those who are experiencing homelessness. Further, the Veteran's Administration has an extensive list of homeless services: https://www.homelessveteransofsandiego.com/.</p>	

Maria Gargano	What are you doing about chronic homelessness? Once the homeless fall out of the shelters where do they go?
<p>Those experiencing chronic homelessness is one of the City's greatest challenges. The programs offered by the City are well equipped to assist those that have a desire for housing. However, the City recognizes that there are many that do not have this desire because of mental illness, drug addiction, or other reasons. In these cases, the City focuses its efforts on multiple contacts with service providers and police officers in the hope that we can assist them. We also ensure that the laws we can enforce are enforced, such as illegal encampments, open drug usage, human trafficking, etc.</p> <p>The City of El Cajon's funding assists several organizations such as ECTLC and Home Start who conduct outreach events to connect the homeless, including the chronic homeless, with services. Also, a Project Homeless Connect event is held periodically in which dozens of service providers provide attention to many homeless, including homeless veterans.</p> <p>The City of El Cajon is extremely concerned when a non-El Cajon homeless individual comes to the City for shelter, whether a motel voucher or another shelter option. This concern is because the City has witnessed individuals that fall out of various programs being left on the street in front of a motel. All future shelter programs that include City funding will have a provision that requires those individuals that fall out of the program be transported to the community from where they most recently came.</p>	

Antonia R	What is your rationale for placing more homeless in our city? Why didn't the county inform the City of El Cajon of all the homeless dumping in our city? How much taxpayer money advertising for this event? Why don't you spread them around the County? Why aren't you protecting us from people with criminal backgrounds? What is your relationship with the El Cajon city council? Why can't we ask questions in front of you today? How many homeless with vouchers are being imported from outside the city? Why aren't you vetting these people first?
This question is specifically intended for the County of San Diego.	

Antonia R	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What will you do with the chronic homeless that refuse help as they don't want to follow the rules? 2. What can everyday citizens do? 3. Where are these cabins in East County? 4. What happened to the homeless person who kidnapped a Santee teen and human trafficked her?
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2. Everyday citizens can be informed, get involved by attending community forums, participate in neighborhood watch, or attend East County Homeless Task Force meetings.
3. The six emergency cabins are located at 660 South 3rd St., El Cajon, CA 92019 (Meridian Baptist Church property).
4. This question is specifically intended for the County of San Diego since this crime occurred in its jurisdiction.

Anna Holmes	The County has laws on homelessness why doesn't the County use the laws on the books? My home is in the middle of El Cajon, and we have needles on our street parkway. Please enforce laws on the books.
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As was explained at the forum, many laws (especially those involving illegal drug usage and possession) have been watered down and most of these law breakers go unprosecuted. In fact, of the 304 arrests the City has made for homeless trespassing since March 1, 2020, only one has been prosecuted by the District Attorney. Unfortunately, the City of El Cajon has no control over which crimes are prosecuted.

Anna Holmes	Why didn't the county inform the City of El Cajon of all the homeless dumping in our city? Why don't you spread them around the County? What is your relationship with the El Cajon city council? Why can't we ask questions in front of you today? How many homeless with vouchers are being imported from outside the city? Why aren't you vetting these people first? Why aren't you protecting us from people with criminal backgrounds? Why can't we ask questions in front of you today? How much taxpayer money advertising for this event? What is your rationale for placing more homeless in our city?
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Jesse Kendrick	What percentage of transients enrolled in voucher program and placed in El Cajon are from outside the El Cajon city limits?																		
<p>During the Forum, the City Manager shared that he received an email from County staff on October 12, 2022 with a breakdown of where County motel voucher recipients were most recently on the streets. The survey of individuals was taken on October 10, 2022. The email indicated the following locations:</p> <table> <tr> <td>City of El Cajon</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td>Bonita</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td>Escondido</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td>Santee</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr> <td>Mexico</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td>Unincorporated East County</td><td>94</td></tr> <tr> <td> Lakeside</td><td>16</td></tr> <tr> <td> Spring Valley</td><td>23</td></tr> <tr> <td> Other Areas</td><td>55</td></tr> </table>		City of El Cajon	1	Bonita	1	Escondido	1	Santee	2	Mexico	1	Unincorporated East County	94	Lakeside	16	Spring Valley	23	Other Areas	55
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Fabby G.	What is your rationale for placing more homeless in our city? Why didn't the county inform the City of El Cajon of all the homeless dumping in our city? How much taxpayer money advertising for this event? Why don't you spread them around the County? Why aren't you protecting us from people with criminal backgrounds? What is your relationship with the El Cajon city council? Why can't we ask questions in front of you today? How many homeless with vouchers are being imported from outside the city? Why aren't you vetting these people first?
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Mary Davis	I would like to see the old Coco's at Main St & Walter & the adjacent vacant lot turned into a one-stop-shop for services, showers, & perhaps a tiny home community. What is preventing developing a comprehensive support services & shelter there?
<p>The City maximizes the funding it receives for homeless services from Federal and State resources. If there is an interested party that could purchase the building from the current owner for this purpose, they could seek to get it approved. The property was purchased in 2020 for over \$1.7 million. However, this property is undergoing renovation and the adjacent property will soon be under construction for commercial use.</p>	

Kaye Kelley Turpin	I have 7 years of sobriety. Many of us in recovery have concerns about the "housing first" model. Do you find that the rule 15a in RHAP contract is helping in the sobriety efforts of those being housed?
This question is specifically intended for the County of San Diego.	

Lydia Bentley	Are you looking to repeal prop47 which seems to have added to the homeless issue for drug addicted homeless persons misdemeanor citations don't allow those who were convicted to drug use, possession + sales to court ordered drug rehab? The misdemeanor charges does not serve as a deterrent.
The City would support any movement to repeal Prop 47, which would need to occur at the state-wide ballot box.	

Tasheen Davenport	I'm suffering with a brain tumor and homeless what is being done to help people with and that's disables with homelessness. I am in need of housing I lost my job due to medical condition and now homeless. With no help to get permanent housing.
If Ms. Davenport is an El Cajon resident, she is encouraged to reach out to Home Start or ECTLC, the City's contractors that run many permanent housing solutions programs.	

Sue Gaeess	I am sure that there will be many great suggestions and ideas presented today. My question would be how are these ideas going to be followed up on?? Follow up meeting would be a great idea!!
The City discusses homelessness formally during two updates each year. Typically, there are additional updates given through the year. Also, in March 2023, the City will be offering four town hall style meetings in which the City wants to hear your voice and discover solutions that have not yet been discussed. Look for more information in early 2023.	

Tim Swing	The County of San Diego owns and operates a Honor Court/Fire training camp at Descanso & Lake Barret areas? Why don't you house the males at these facilities while they are being detoxed and realigned into society? Also check their birth records and license for place of origins. Send them home!
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Mark Collins	1) Use of junkland or surplus land to erect tiny houses. 2) use of untitled or vacant retail or warehouse space. Gillespie Field or space in Santee/Lakeside 3) Priority for veterans (30%) of the homeless.
If residents are aware of properties that are under-utilized and on the market and have access to sewer and water for bathrooms and showers, pass this information along and the City can evaluate the site.	

Cynthia Gould	Medical care – can volunteer doctors, nurses, etc. do checks? I've seen sick individuals. Veterinary care – possible volunteer vets. There are people with pets.
The City would welcome volunteer medical professionals to accompany the Homeless Outreach Team depending on the circumstances. Homeless individuals can sign up for Medical from the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency or contact one of the non-profit health providers who can assist with the application process. Examples of organizations in El Cajon include St. Paul's PACE (who serve 55+), San Ysidro Health or Family Health Centers of San Diego, just to name a few.	

C. Fisher	Is El Cajon a sanctuary city? Y R PPL here vs there (other cities)? The border is open! YR we doing our part? Who are homeless; US citizens, illegal alien, vets? Root cause?
The City is not a declared sanctuary city.	

Chuck Fortin	With the number of homeless growing faster than services, how do we scale these programs up? Need more housing? Or more shelters? Other?
<p>There is a need for more homeless services throughout the region. El Cajon calls on the County and other cities to do their part as we collectively strive to find and implement new ways to provide services and housing. The challenge is when one city takes the initiative and other cities do not, it furthers the inequity that inherently exists between communities.</p> <p>The City's rationale for initiating the emergency cabin program is because we believe that this can be replicated at many different locations around the County. Other cities interested can contact El Cajon for the path forward.</p>	

Gina Sylvester	What can I do to help?
The best way to help is for residents to become educated, be involved, talk to your neighbors, join or start a neighborhood watch group, attend East County Homeless Task Force meetings, and volunteer at the dozens of non-profits that serve the homeless community in the region.	

Loretta Walker	Is the city or county contacting local churches to learn how they may be of service? (Although some churches are 'Hurting' they are still trying to find ways of connecting)
El Cajon has a good relationship with many of the churches in the area and we are always willing to work with them for long-term solutions.	
Masheila Taylor	Many people are becoming homeless due to rent increases. What are we doing to address rent control to prevent homelessness?
Housing costs are extraordinarily high in many parts of California, including in San Diego County. There are many ways to address housing costs with short-term and long-term pros and cons for each of these strategies. The City of El Cajon is committed to increasing the number of housing units on the market, increasing supply and variety of housing opportunities. It has done this by making it easier to develop in the City, removing regulatory red-tape, and being the only city in San Diego County that does not charge developer impact fees to keep housing costs lower. The State has rent control in place for certain properties (AB-1482). For more information please call CSA San Diego or visit their website at <u>CSA San Diego County</u> .	

Bonnie Dawson	<p>1. How as a community do we change the mindset of the homeless from [?] to El Cajon because of wealth when warrants the ability to fire in the homeless environment.</p> <p>2. Will the city be applying for the county's grants for homeless service facilities like shelters and safe parking. If not, why not?</p>
<p>1. Given the way this question is presented, the City is unclear of what information is being sought.</p> <p>2. The City applied for the grant offered by the County for homeless shelter facilities. We are waiting to see if the grant will be awarded.</p>	

Mark Hardy	What is the cost of each tiny home?
Because the emergency cabins built in El Cajon were constructed with volunteer workers, on wellgraded land, and with existing bathrooms and shower facilities, the cost was about \$10,000 per home. This cost could increase if the infrastructure was not in place.	

Edward Rodden	There are some very good agencies trying to help but the homeless issue seems to continue to get worse. I feel that some of the efforts or action plans that are being done are not working. There are certainly many dynamics at play. At this point we need to look at new ideas. I hope we can put all options on the table. Would like to see the current law changed that says it is a right to live on the street. It is obvious this is inhumane. Can we look at re-introducing state mental hospitals to help-house that are mentally ill that cannot care for themselves?
The City agrees with Mr. Rodden that this is a complex issue and requires lots of ideas and different solutions to meet the needs of many types of individuals that find themselves homeless. One challenge is that regionally, we have focused on one issue, with not much success. That issue is housing. In addition to housing, the City of El Cajon believes that regionally there should be a robust plan to address mental illness and drug addictions ravaging those without homes.	

Sara Marshall	What percentage of the people who aren't in jail because of legislation would be on the streets homeless. Not all criminals are homeless.
The City of El Cajon does not receive detailed data on the number of individuals release from jail that are declared homeless from El Cajon. However, we are aware that a recent SANDAG study indicated that 66% of inmates were at one time homeless.	

Unknown	<p>1. Where will the Crisis Stabilization Unit be located?</p> <p>2. Can you talk about the bad press the hotels/voucher program received? It sounded like an unsupervised drug and crime fest.</p>
<p>1. The City has received a notice from the County of San Diego that they wish to establish a Crisis Stabilization Unit and sobering center at 200 South Magnolia Avenue (the location of the former County Assessor's Office).</p> <p>2. The City does not have jurisdictional authority to oversee how the voucher program is operated. While the City applauds the County's efforts and allocation of funds toward homeless solutions, the City contends that the County's contractor could operate a program that has less of a disproportionate negative impact on the residents of El Cajon.</p>	

Shanna Welsh-Levin	Is the county willing to provide zoning variances for using Emergency Sleeping Cabins as a housing solution?
This question is specifically intended for the County of San Diego.	

Kary Seigfried	1. Why can't we have safe tenting zones for the chronically homeless? Send resources to them because they don't have the presence of mind to advocate for themselves.
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	2. Is there a website for trash pick-up near homeless area hotspots? Near Chase Ave. ramp towards highway.
<p>1. The City of El Cajon does not feel that there are suitable locations in the City that residents would tolerate for a tent zone which accommodates a homeless lifestyle and does not help individuals towards permanent housing. El Cajon's programs focus on helping individuals to secure long-term permanent housing.</p> <p>2. Those that wish to report trash, illegal lodging in the public right-of-way, graffiti, etc. can do so through the City of El Cajon's mobile phone app or through the City's website at www.elcajon.gov/i-want-to/report/requests-and-issues.</p>	

Lenny Bly	Is there any plan to help the percentage of homeless people who are able to, once again, become self-supporting members of the community? Job resources, access to clean clothes or transportation to job interviews, drug treatment programs, etc. Some people just need a little push and assistance.
The City of El Cajon's permanent housing programs are geared to folks as you described. Through the housing navigation program, wrap around social services provide all the items you mentioned.	

Pam Shironaka	Once the participant has violated RHAP rules can they re-enter. Do homeless who refuse to enter RHAP get introduced to other resources?
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J. H. Moreland	How many children and pets are with homeless people in El Cajon and what is being done to be sure they are cared for?
The City of El Cajon does not conduct a comprehensive count of its homeless population, except for the Point in Time Count conducted the Regional Task Force on the Homeless each year. That count does not include pets in the survey.	

D. Thistle	Why are we not implementing a modified New Hampshire Title XII Ch 165 Sec 5 law to cure 1/3 of all homelessness immediately?
The law enacted by the State of New Hampshire requires public agencies to support veterans that become unable to support themselves or their families. Funding for this type of program comes to the state and county—cities do not receive general welfare funding. A similar law to that of New Hampshire's would need to occur at the state level so that funding could be allocated to support that law.	

Shari Cohen	<p>1. Is it true that San Diego City is taking East County tax money for its pet projects? Thus making less money for homeless issues and traffic issues.</p> <p>2. Homeless Encampment (off Los Coches-South) Uphill corner of Camino Canada & East County Drive. Can we look into this?</p>
<p>1. The City of El Cajon is not aware of this.</p> <p>2. This question is specifically intended for the County of San Diego</p>	

F. G.	Are you running for Congress?
None of the city elected officials or staff of the City of El Cajon attending the Homeless Forum plan to run to serve as a representative to the United States House of Congress.	

Estevan Villegas	Regarding the voucher program, how many homeless individuals who receive a voucher for an El Cajon motel are from the city of El Cajon (prior to experiencing homelessness)? How many are from elsewhere?																		
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Melissa Foley	I have been homeless 3 different times. I was never offered a voucher. I have been to crisis house, Home Start, dreams for change and rapid housing, homeless solutions. I was offered the safe parking which I utilized. I want to park the El Cajon police and salvation army. No phone calls or emails were returned to me. I have been on the Section 8 waiting list for 9 years. RHAP helped with some of my rent before I had to surrender my apartment. Are these organizations held accountable for helping or not?
The City of El Cajon is sorry to hear about your experience. The City has contractual agreements with Home Start for the types of programs you described. If you feel you are not getting the service you need, you can reach out to the City's housing staff at (619) 441-1710.	

We also encourage folks to apply for affordable rental housing that has a shorter waiting list. Please call the City of El Cajon Housing Division.